

**JOHN W. THIERET,  
COLLEAGUE AND EDITOR FRIEND (1969–2005)**

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John Thieret's reputation as a dedicated botanist and unique individual preceded our actual meeting, which occurred sometime in the late sixties. Over the years we drifted apart, but the impact John made on my professional career and my success with *Sida, Contributions to Botany* remains strong. Although he spent the night at our house only a couple of times when he visited the SMU herbarium, the field trips we took in my 1969 red Ford pickup were the highlights of our botanical relationship.

Our biggest collecting trip was to Guadalajara, Mexico in April of 1970. We traveled by way of the Chihuahuan Desert and then returned through the Sonoran Desert. The pickup was the perfect mode of transportation for a long-range collecting trip because of the saddle tanks and the camper shell. We could travel six hundred miles between fill-ups and could sleep in the back if we couldn't find lodging. Also, there was plenty of room for all our collecting supplies.

The decision to take this particular trip was made on a lark. We'd heard of others doing this and so we thought we'd do the same. As it turned out, we actually did find quite a few noteworthy specimens. When Rupert Barneby found out where we were going, he suggested we visit some locations for the legumes that he had collected some years back. He needed some flowering specimens. We were successful in finding some specimens north of Zacatecas, which he cited in his monograph on *Dalea*.

The trip was far from boring. North of Guadalajara, John injured his ankle while trying to get a specimen from the branch of a tree. He knew he had sprained his ankle, but he was afraid he might have broken it, too. An x-ray in a hospital in Guadalajara showed no apparent broken bones, but judging by the amount of pain and the routine swelling by the end of the day, John felt that it was more than just a sprain. However, with my expertise in speaking Spanish, I managed to find ice at motels to treat the swelling. We were able to continue with our collecting trip.

John was always the teacher. To pass the time when driving, we would grill each other on botanical glossary terms and other aspects of botany. I had never taken an economic botany course, but I survived the equivalent of one after experiencing the tropics with him. He was the opposite of me, since I eat to live





John Thieret, Chihuahuan Desert, Mexico, April 1970.

and he lived to eat. In the restaurants, meals were scrutinized very diligently and I was often quizzed on the content. He ate and sampled many kinds of fruits from the markets, many of which I had never heard of. In the field, he was always tasting and smelling the fruits, leaves, etc. and discussing the results after spitting out the remains. His knowledge of tropical fruits was uncanny.

We followed the coastline on our way home. As we neared the border, we drove past a bakery in a small town. John's acute sense of smell overcame him and I had to turn around so he could stock up on some bread before we left Mexico. My common sense told me to refrain since we had come that far with no digestive problems. As it turned out, he did get a light case of diarrhea, but I did not pursue the issue.

At Mazatlán, we bought more newspapers (by the kilos) for our collections at the local newspaper office, and we spent our last night in Mexico south of Nogales, Arizona. U.S. Customs wanted time to go through our specimens looking for rusts for one of their projects. We went to dinner (lunch) and when we returned, customs had just finished. We headed back to Texas with our many collections and John's foot still in pain.

Once we got on the road, John got anxious to get home and check out his injury. We drove all night and stopped in Abilene, Texas for gas the next morning. At Love Field in Dallas, I let him out at the airport where he caught a plane





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and I went on home. I arrived home about five o'clock in the afternoon after being up and at the wheel for thirty-six hours. John told me later that they had found a hairline crack in one of his ankle bones in addition to the sprain.

Although John was not one for attending meetings, he agreed to accompany me in the red Ford pickup to the Southwestern Association of Naturalists meeting in Tucson, Arizona. During registration, he headed over to a young man and shook hands. The fellow seemed confused and asked John if they had met before. John informed him that they had been officemates for ten years back in Chicago. John's appearance was much different because he had shaved his beard that he had always had. Everyone had a good laugh about it, especially John.

The field trips were productive and entertaining, but John's most valuable contribution to my career was his involvement in *Sida*. Lloyd Shinnars had told me that I needed to meet John when I first arrived at SMU, and he was right. When I inherited *Sida*, he, along with others, encouraged me to continue its publication, as opposed to others who felt I should drop the journal. With the help of Mrs. Helen Koresh, a sister of Lloyd's, I was able to clear the financial obligations Lloyd had encumbered with the authors of unpublished manuscripts. I sent John some articles for him to review that I had written about Lloyd. John really "cleaned them up" and returned them with more red ink than black.



This was the beginning of his “internship” and status as Associate Editor of *Sida* that he held until his death.

I have always considered myself lucky to have associated with many individuals whose knowledge and insight enriched my professional knowledge and furthered my career goals. John was one of those individuals. The wide range of things I learned from John—both professionally and as a friend—will always figure significantly in my life.